

Message Text

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 2247

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C O N F I D E N T I A L MEXICO 0252

LIMDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: SNAR/MX/US/OREP

SUBJ: NARCOTICS: IS MEXICO ENTERING A "TURKEY PHASE"?

DEPT FOR ASST SECRETARY ROGERS

LIMA FOR AMB VANCE

REF: MEXICO 0233

1. QUITE APART FROM THE OTHER IMPLICATIONS OF PRESIDENT ECHEVERRIA'S REMARKABLE PROPOSAL FOR BROADER ANTI-NARCOTICS COOPERATION (REFTEL), ONE NOTION IN PARTICULAR INTRIGUES ME: HIS SUGGESTION THAT OUTSIDE FUNDS MIGHT BE NEEDED TO CREATE ALTERNATIVE SOURCES OF EMPLOYMENT FOR CAMPESINOS NOW ENGAGED IN DRUG CULTIVATION. THE SUGGESTION, OBVIOUSLY, IS THAT HE MAY HAVE IN MIND SOMETHING AKIN TO OUR CROP SUBSTITUTION EFFORTS IN TURKEY.

2. AS FAR AS I AM AWARE, THIS IS THE FIRST TIME THAT THIS CONSIDERATION HAS SURFACED IN THE CONTEXT OF THE CAMPAIGN IN MEXICO. IN THE PAST, THE GOM HAS NOT PAID ANY APPARENT ATTENTION TO THE ECONOMIC IMPLICATIONS OF DRUG CULTI-
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VATION AMONG THE CAMPESINOS. INSTEAD, IT HAS TENDED

TO VIEW DRUG GROWING AS AN ILLEGAL ACTIVITY, PURE AND SIMPLE, WHICH REQUIRED STAMPING OUT WITHOUT COMPROMISE. WE IN THE EMBASSY, MEANWHILE, HAVE TENDED TO VIEW CROP SUBSTITUTION AS A NON-STARTER IN MEXICO, GIVEN THE REMOTENESS OF THE AREAS IN WHICH DRUGS ARE GROWN, THE SECRETIVE, FLY-BY-NIGHT CHARACTER OF THE ACTIVITY, AND THE BELIEF THAT MOST WAS GROWN BY SQUATTERS ON ILLEGALLY-HELD LANDS.

3. IN OUR WEDNESDAY CONVERSATION, HOWEVER, THE PRESIDENT FOR THE FIRST TIME VOICED SOME CONCERN AT THE FATE OF CAMPESINOS CUT OFF FROM THIS NEW SOURCE OF REVENUE AND AT THE NEED TO PROVIDE ALTERNATIVE EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES FOR THEM. AND IN MY SUBSEQUENT TALK WITH THE ATTORNEY GENERAL, HE TOO STRESSED THE ECONOMIC SIDE -- THE FACT THAT A PEASANT PRODUCING SIX KILOS OF OPIUM GUM MIGHT HOPE TO RECEIVE AS MUCH AS \$7,000 IN A YEAR, MORE THAN HE MIGHT OTHERWISE SEE IN A LIFETIME. COINCIDENTALLY, MARQUIS CHILDS ALSO TOLD ME WEDNESDAY THAT HE HAD HEARD CONCERN EXPRESSED BY A "HIGH-LEVEL SOURCE AT THE PRESIDENCY" THAT IT WAS IMPOSSIBLE FOR MEXICO TO WIPE OUT ALL DRUG PLANTINGS WITHOUT SUFFERING SERIOUS POLITICAL CONSEQUENCES -- EVEN RIOTS

4. THERE ARE TWO POSSIBLE EXPLANATIONS FOR THIS NEW CONCERN: ONE MAY BE A FEAR THAT CAMPESINOS, DEPRIVED OF EARNINGS THAT HAVE NOW BECOME SO SUBSTANTIAL, MIGHT INDEED REACT VIOLENTLY AND THIS CONTRIBUTE TO LARGER GOM PROBLEMS WITH RURAL UNREST. ANOTHER IS THE POSSIBILITY THAT ECHEVERRIA HAS COME TO VIEW THE PROBLEM IN THE LARGER CONTEXT OF MEXICO'S RURAL UNDER-DEVELOPMENT GENERALLY, FOR THE RELIEF OF WHICH THE GOM IS ALREADY SEEKING MASSIVE INFUSIONS OF OUTSIDE CAPITAL.

5. WHATEVER THE REASON, IT NOW SEEMS LIKELY TO ME THAT WE SHALL HEAR MORE FROM ECHEVERRIA OF THE ECONOMIC CONSEQUENCES FOR CAMPESINOS OF THE DRUG CONTROL AND ERADICATION CAMPAIGN. IT IS NOTEWORTHY TOO THAT BOTH CONGRESSMAN WOLFF AND GILMAN WERE INTRIGUED BY THE POSSIBILITY OF A TURKISH-TYPE CROP SUBSTITUTION

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PROGRAM IN MEXICO. THUS I BELIEVE WE WOULD DO WELL TO GIVE SOME CAREFUL THOUGHT NOW AS TO WHETHER SUCH A PROGRAM WOULD BE FEASIBLE HERE - AND TO THE PROBLEM OF FINANCING SUCH A PROGRAM, GIVEN MEXICAN SENSIBILITIES TOWARD US "AID".

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